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Chairman: Mr. Chowdhury ..... (Bangladesh)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 116: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 (*continued*) (A/51/950 and Corr.1 (Arabic only) and Add.1-6; A/52/7/Add.1 and Add.2, A/52/16/Add.1 and A/52/303 and Add.1)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/52/L.19: United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (A/52/707; A/C.5/52/21 and Add.1)

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced document A/52/707, which contained the Advisory Committee's report on the Secretary-General's statement (A/C.5/52/21) concerning draft resolution A/52/L.19, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala". In his statement, the Secretary-General estimated that resource requirements for the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for an additional 21 months would amount to $66,654,800 gross ($61,815,100 net). That estimate represented an increase of some $3.2 million over the amount which would have been required to cover another 21 months at the level of resources authorized previously. The increase was related to the Secretary-General's request that the staffing component of the Mission should be strengthened and that two new subregional offices should be established.

2. The Advisory Committee's comments on those proposals were contained in paragraphs 7 to 22 of its report (A/52/707). Paragraphs 10, 11, 14, 17 and 19 contained observations which would lead to significant economies. However, the Advisory Committee had not recommended any reduction of the estimates, since the additional expenditure arising out of its recommendations in paragraphs 15 and 16 might partially offset the economies referred to in the other paragraphs. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee had recommended the approval of $61.8 million net for MINUGUA, plus a proportionate amount for staff assessment.

3. After the Advisory Committee had completed its report, draft resolution A/52/L.19 had been amended to reflect an extension of MINUGUA for nine months instead of 21. The Secretary-General had submitted an amendment to his report (A/C.5/52/21/Add.1) indicating that, should the General Assembly decide to adopt draft resolution A/52/L.19/Rev.1, an additional appropriation of $28,200,000 would be required under section 3 of the proposed programme budget for 1998-1999 and an additional appropriation of $1,752,800 would be required under section 32, to be offset by the same amount under income section 1. However, the Advisory Committee had not found it necessary to review the Secretary-General's amended statement, and maintained its original submission of $66,654,800 gross ($61,815,100 net).

4. The General Assembly had already decided not to link the political mandates of peacekeeping missions to the budget periods, in order to ensure financial stability and predictability in budgeting for such missions. Therefore, the Committee might wish to consider whether it should proceed likewise in the case of MINUGUA, which was expected to continue operations until 1999. Should the Committee decide otherwise and approve the proposed appropriation of $28.2 million, the Advisory Committee assumed that its comments would be taken into account in the implementation of the appropriation authorized by the Fifth Committee.

5. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that, according to the budget process established by General Assembly resolution 41/213, which remained in force, the financing of missions involved additional appropriations. The practice which the General Assembly had followed with respect to such activities during its fiftieth session should not be continued, since it created difficulties for the entire budget process. It was unfortunate that, because of the political position held by the United States delegation with respect to the budget ceiling, draft resolution A/52/L.19 had been revised to reduce the amount originally requested by the Secretary-General. In the specific case of MINUGUA, it was perfectly appropriate to provide enough resources to enable the Mission to fulfil its mandate for the duration of the implementation of the peace agreements (in other words, until the end of 1999). She therefore agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Fifth Committee should authorize the amount originally requested by the Secretary-General.

6. **Ms. Castellanos González** (Guatemala) said that, since its establishment, MINUGUA had played a vital role in the Guatemalan peace process. Its verification functions, which were fully supported by the Guatemalan Government, were still relevant. It would have been preferable for the General Assembly to have extended the Mission's mandate up to the year 2000, as specified in the Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements. However, under draft resolution A/52/L.19/Rev.1, resources would be provided for MINUGUA only until the end of 1998. She hoped that MINUGUA would be provided with the resources it needed to complete its mandate by continuing to function until the year 2000.

7. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should take a decision on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/52/L.19/Rev.1, based on the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

8. **Ms. Shearouse** (United States of America) said that her delegation was prepared to take a decision on the revised appropriation of $28.2 million referred to in document A/C.5/52/21/Add.1, but not on the recommendation contained in the Advisory Committee's report (A/52/707).

9. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would return to the issue after holding further informal consultations.

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.6/52/L.15 and Corr.1: report of the International Law Commission on the work of its forty-ninth session (A/C.5/52/23 and Corr.1)

10. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Advisory Committee had considered the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/52/23) on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.6/52/L.15 and Corr.1, which took note of the comments of the International Law Commission on the question of a split session for 1998, as well as of the Commission's position that it should hold an 11-week session in 1998 and a 12-week session in 1999.

11. The Advisory Committee recalled that, in the budget proposals for the 1998-1999 biennium, the Secretariat had requested a provision of $1,851,100 for two 10-week sessions in Geneva and had indicated that the Commission would consider the issue of a split session of five weeks in Geneva and five weeks in New York during its 1997 session. The Advisory Committee also recalled that in paragraph III.15 of its report on the proposed programme budget for 1998-1999 (A/52/7), it had indicated that, although it had been informed that such a session would affect the cost only marginally, it believed that other factors such as the meeting capacity at Headquarters, which was already saturated, should be taken into account. In paragraph VIII.145 of its report, the Committee had further indicated that during 1995 and 1996, the number of requests for meetings with interpretation in New York that could not be accommodated had been 202 and 174 respectively.

12. The annex to the Secretary-General's statement on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.5/52/L.15 and Corr.1 showed the additional requirements for an 11-week split session in Geneva in 1998 and a 12-week session in 1999 in the same venue to amount to $275,528, and annex II showed additional requirements of $245,200 for an 11-week split session to be held first in Geneva and then in New York in 1998 and a 12-week session in Geneva in 1999.

13. In the light of the Advisory Committee's observations, the International Law Commission's preference to hold the second part of its session also in Geneva, as indicated in paragraph 226 of its report (A/52/10), and the Secretariat's recent confirmation that developments in conference servicing now allowed for the second part of the Commission's 1998 session to be serviced in Geneva, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/C.6/52/L.15 and Corr.1, an additional appropriation of $275,500 would be required under section 6 of the proposed programme budget for the 1998-1999 biennium.

14. **Ms. Shearouse** (United States of America) said that her delegation had difficulties with the financial implications of draft resolution A/C.6/52/L.15. Historically, the International Law Commission had always met for 10-week sessions. Although she understood the need for a split session in 1998, she felt that the Commission could accomplish each session's work within 10 weeks. Her delegation therefore could not support the Advisory Committee's recommendation.

15. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) asked whether, according to the budget process established by General Assembly resolution 41/213, the budgetary implications of the draft resolution would be financed from the contingency fund. She also wished to know the current level of resources in the contingency fund.

16. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the amount recommended by the Advisory Committee would have to come from the contingency fund. The fund established for 1998-1999 contained about $19 million; the recommended appropriation would be the first drawdown from the fund for that period.

17. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that the Committee should take a decision, in line with the budget process, that simply indicated the budgetary implications of a decision of the General Assembly. Only the Sixth Committee could take a decision on the length of the International Law Commission's sessions.

18. **Ms. Shearouse** (United States of America) said that she was fully aware of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213. However, her delegation was opposed in principle to the extension of the Commission's sessions, and therefore could not support the financial implications

thereof. The Committee could either hold further informal consultations or take a vote on the matter.

19. **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba) said that it would be useful to know what the Sixth Committee had decided with respect to the length of the Commission's sessions, since the budgetary implications under consideration were based on that decision. She agreed that informal consultations might be useful as a means of clearing up the difficulty mentioned by the United States delegation, since the genuine concerns of any Member State should be taken into consideration.

20. **Mr. Tankoano** (Niger) said that the Sixth Committee had taken a vote, but not a recorded vote, on the International Law Commission's request to extend its sessions. The majority of delegations had supported the Commission's position, in view of its heavy workload. The measure was intended to enhance the Commission's efficiency by enabling it to complete its work at each session so that items would not have to be carried over from year to year.

21. **Mr. Saha** (India) said that his delegation agreed with the view expressed by the representative of Cuba. The Fifth Committee was not entitled to alter a decision that had been made by the Sixth Committee. Informal consultations should be held on the matter.

22. **Mr. Tommo Monthe** (Cameroon) said that the length of the session of the International Law Commission was a fundamentally important issue for the Sixth Committee; the Fifth Committee's prerogative was restricted to debating the financial implications of the decisions which that Committee had made and to accepting or rejecting the relevant recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

Request for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research resulting from the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on the work programme of the Institute for 1998 (A/C.5/52/14)

23. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that, because the Advisory Committee had already discussed the request made by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for its annual subvention in the context of the programme budget, the Committee had recommended that a subvention in the amount of $213,000 should be made available for 1998.

24. **Ms. Shearouse** (United States of America) recalled that the General Assembly had decided at its forty-ninth session that future funding for regional institutes would be considered only on the basis of criteria proposed and approved by the General Assembly to determine whether such institutes should be funded from the regular budget. Her delegation could not recall the General Assembly ever having defined the criteria for the inclusion of regional centres in the regular budget, and therefore had reservations about the continued financing of the Institute by that method. The Secretariat should clarify the relevant criteria.

25. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda), supported by **Ms. Goicochea** (Cuba), endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee.

26. **Mr. Halbwachs** (Controller) said that the General Assembly had not yet taken action on the report which it had requested regarding the funding of regional institutes. However, UNIDIR was not a regional institute because its statute, which the General Assembly itself had adopted, stipulated that the Assembly should provide it with subventions.

27. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to recommend that the General Assembly should take note of the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/52/14 and the recommendations thereon of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

28. *It was so decided.*

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its organizational and substantive sessions of 1997 (A/C.5/52/17)

29. **The Chairman** said that, since the resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council referred to in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/52/17 did not at the current stage necessitate additional appropriations for the biennium 1998-1999, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend that the General Assembly should take note of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/52/17 regarding the revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its organizational and substantive sessions of 1997.

30. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 153: Human resources management (*continued*) (A/52/580 and Corr.1)

31. **Ms. Salim** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat

contained in document A/52/580, said that human resources planning was a critical element of the Secretary-General's human resources strategy. In order to plan more effectively for the implementation of programmes and mandates, it was essential that the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) should be in a position to assist programme managers with the forecasting, planning and effective utilization of all the human resources at the Organization's disposal.

32. To that end, the Secretary-General's report had been submitted in a new format that responded to the need for more comprehensive reporting on human resources issues in the Secretariat. Accordingly, the second part of the report had been conceived as a human resources planning report identifying the major characteristics of the Secretariat staff and the trends that could reasonably be expected in the future. It also analysed the major demographic characteristics of Secretariat staff with respect to a number of parameters that cut across departments and offices. Much of the human resources analysis had been made possible through improved data quality from the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) database.

33. Turning to other matters, she drew the Committee's attention to conference room paper A/C.5/52/CRP.2 on the implementation of resolution 51/226 in which the Secretariat had requested guidance from the General Assembly as to whether the transitional measures applicable to staff serving on peacekeeping support account posts should be extended to all staff members who were serving on appointments of less than one year as at 3 April 1997 and had been placed on a regular budget or extrabudgetary post for one year or longer. Such an extension would require the specific authorization of the General Assembly. The Secretariat had also asked for clarification of paragraph 27 of section III.B of General Assembly resolution 51/226 with respect to the level of posts for which staff members having served for at least 12 months in peacekeeping or other field missions would be eligible to apply when notice of an internal vacancy had been issued.

34. Moreover, in its resolution 51/226, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to prepare, no later than the end of 1997, guidelines on the terms of reference, selection, hiring and renewal of contracts of consultants, and to submit those guidelines to the Advisory Committee. All of those issues were currently being addressed, but larger questions had arisen in the course of internal discussions within the Secretariat. The whole issue of the use of consultants was closely related to that of core versus non-core functions and fixed-term versus career appointments, on which the Secretary-General was scheduled to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. Accordingly, OHRM wished to request that the submission of guidelines on the use of consultants should be deferred until the fifty-third session to allow time for the issue to be thoroughly reviewed by the Secretary-General's task force on human resources management. It was envisaged that the best practices of all aspects of the recruitment and use of consultants would be examined by a team of independent experts. In addition, the best interests of the Organization would be served by eliciting the views of other entities in the United Nations system. Such cooperation and coordination would result in improved procedures including the development of common rostering of candidates for consultancies, harmonization of levels of remuneration, and application of common selection standards.

35. **Mr. Yamagiwa** (Japan) expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Secretariat for its report contained in document A/52/580 and, in particular, for part II which, for the first time, provided an understanding of the current positive trends in the personnel structure of the Organization. At the same time, however, his delegation regretted the extraordinary delay in the submission of the report, which it had received only 10 days earlier. Perhaps the Secretariat could provide an explanation.

36. Furthermore, the document itself contained a number of errors and inconsistencies. In table F, for example, most of the figures for the percentage of total appointments were incorrect and, in paragraph 94, the figure of 8,580, which was the number of women recruited in the reference period, represented 39.8 per cent of the 21,563 all staff recruited during that period, and not 32 per cent as stated in the document. Given the fact that precision was required for the Committee's deliberations, he urged the Secretariat to pay closer attention to the preparation of the report in the future.

37. Regarding the representation of Member States, his delegation welcomed the fact that the number of under-represented States had been reduced from 22 in 1996 to 20 in 1997 and wished to express its appreciation for the Secretariat's efforts in that regard. At the same time, some explanation was needed of the increase in the number of unrepresented States from 23 in 1996 to 25 in 1997. As Japan was one of the most seriously under-represented Member States, his delegation reiterated its urgent request that the Secretariat should, as soon as possible, establish a concrete plan to redress the situation.

38. Regarding recruitment activities, as described in paragraphs 35 to 39 of the report, his delegation would like some clarification on the number of staff appointed to P-2

and P-3 posts without having passed national competitive examinations, as well as information on the legal basis for those appointments, in the light of General Assembly resolution 51/226. The five staff members referred to in paragraph 37 of the report were of special concern in that regard. His delegation would also like a breakdown by year of examination for the 26 appointments made from among successful candidates in national competitive examinations. In that connection, the Secretariat should spare no effort to shorten the time required to make appointments, including improvement of coordination with the Office of Human Resources Management.

39. Referring to Part Two of the report, which dealt with human resources demographics, he said that his delegation shared the Secretariat's concern about the relatively small number of staff in the lower grades in both the Professional and General Service categories, but saw the small number of higher level posts in the two categories as a fairly common phenomenon among sound organizations, which did not limit career development disproportionately. Regarding staff morale with respect to career development, he emphasized the importance of fairness and transparency in the promotion procedure rather than the availability of top positions.

40. He welcomed the continued increase in the number of permanent appointments of staff subject to geographical distribution from 1987 to 1995, as well as the increase in the number of fixed-term appointments both in absolute terms and as a proportion of overall staff.

41. His delegation fully shared the Secretariat's concern regarding the shortage of young staff. In that connection, he noted that 44 per cent of staff members who had resigned were below 35 years of age and 70 per cent were below 45. The Secretariat was very urgently requested to provide a diagnosis of the situation, together with proposals for remedying it.

42. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) said that serious deficiencies existed in the use of consultants within the Organization, as had been noted, for example, by the Board of Auditors in its report on the voluntary funds administered by UNHCR (A/52/5/Add.5). While his delegation could join the consensus on the Assistant Secretary-General's request to defer submission of the report on the use of consultants and associated contractual procedures until the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, the relevant rules and regulations, as well as the pertinent provisions of General Assembly resolution 51/226, should in the meantime be implemented in order to remedy deficiencies in the use of consultants identified by the Board of Auditors and other external bodies.

43. In conclusion, he asked when the Secretariat expected the report requested in paragraph 14 of General Assembly resolution 51/221 to be available.

44. **Mr. Saha** (India) thanked the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management for providing the clarifications on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 51/226 in document A/C.5/52/CRP.2, in response to questions raised by his delegation at an earlier meeting. He requested that the members of the Group of 77 and China should be given time to respond to the conference room paper and to provide the Secretariat with the requisite unambiguous guidance.

45. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) noted that table 4 in document A/52/580, while it showed total staff changes between 30 June 1996 and 30 June 1997, did not indicate which posts had been affected. He would be grateful if the Secretariat could provide that information.

46. **Ms. Brennen-Haylock** (Bahamas) noted that, in paragraph 29 of document A/52/580, the target for the overall participation rate of women in posts subject to geographical distribution by the year 2000 was given as 35 per cent. It was her understanding that, under General Assembly resolution 51/226, that target had been increased to 50 per cent. She asked for clarification from the Secretariat. She also wondered how far the Organization was from achieving the 25 per cent participation rate of women in posts at the D-1 level and above.

47. In table B on page 14 of the report, the figures for the degree of representation of Member States in the North American and Caribbean region did not properly reflect the fact that the Caribbean subregion was grossly under-represented, accounting for less than 1 per cent of the figure for the region as a whole.

48. Finally, she noted with concern the statement in paragraph 87 of the report that the current rate of increase in female staff members in the Director and Professional categories would not result in gender equality by the year 2000. That goal had been reaffirmed at every session of the General Assembly for a number of years and she expressed the hope that the Secretariat would work more diligently to achieve it.

49. **Ms. Salim** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), replying to questions raised by a number of delegations, said that the delay in issuing document A/52/580 and any errors in the figures it contained were attributable to the fact that the transition to the

Integrated Management Information System was not yet complete. It was hoped that the system would shortly have been stabilized and that it would be possible to issue the next report in time and with fewer errors.

50. Regarding the participation rate of women in high-level posts, she said that 22.8 per cent of posts at D-1 level and above were currently held by women.

51. Replies to the other questions asked by delegations would be provided in writing.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.